

VZCZCXRO5081
PP RUEHBC RUEHDA RUEHDBU RUEHDE RUEHGI RUEHJS RUEHKUK RUEHLH RUEHMA
RUEHPA RUEHPW RUEHROV
DE RUEHDK #1352/01 1761433
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 251433Z JUN 07
FM AMEMBASSY DAKAR
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8645
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNISL/ISLAMIC COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 DAKAR 001352

SIPDIS

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR AF/W, AF/RSA, DRL/IRF AND INR/AA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM KISL](#) [PTER ECON SG](#)

SUBJECT: MOURIDE ISLAMIC LEADERS PREACH NONVIOLENCE AND GOOD
RELATIONS WITH THE U.S.

REF: A. DAKAR 1266

[1](#)B. 06 DAKAR 2940 AND PREVIOUS

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (SBU) Having recently visited Senegal's largest religious order, the Tidjanas (Ref A), on June 15 Ambassador Jacobs traveled to the holy city of Touba, to call on the Khalif of the Mouride brotherhood. The Mourides are the richest and most influential Sufi brotherhood in Senegal. The Khalif expressed his appreciation for the bilateral cooperation between Senegal and the U.S. and asked that Mourides in America be protected. The Ambassador donated books to an education institute, toured the library of Touba, and visited the impressive headquarters of Hizbut Tarquiyyah. Mouride authorities expressed their commitment to disseminating the nonviolent Islamic philosophy that has governed their relationship with the world since the founding of the movement over one hundred years ago. END SUMMARY.

THE KHALIF COMMENDS US DIPLOMACY

[1](#)2. (SBU) The 92 year-old Khalif, the venerated and undisputed leader of the Mouride community, Serigne Salio Mbacke, the last surviving son of Mouride founder, Cheikh Amadou Bamba, would not be easily recognized as (by our estimate) being one of the 50 most influential religious leaders in the world. He received the Ambassador dressed in a plain cotton shift while reclining on a simple day bed and resting against acrylic blankets packed in plastic covers. His grip was strong, his mind sharp, but his voice was barely audible and required repetition from his Chief of Protocol. The Khalif commended U.S. diplomacy and expressed his gratitude to the Ambassador for the friendship that the U.S. has with Senegal. He also noted the importance of the Mouride community in the U.S., both to explain Mouride Islam and for their economic ties. He expressed his satisfaction about the compassion they enjoy in America. The Khalif requested that the Ambassador be his envoy in helping Americans understand and "protect" the Mouride community in the U.S. The short discussion did not touch on Senegalese politics, but Mbacke wanted the Ambassador to understand that he recognizes the sensitive nature of the relationship with the Government. (NOTE: President Wade is a Mouride, and, as noted in reftels, has strongly played that card in consolidating his power. END NOTE.) The Khalif insisted that the Mouride community remains independent of the Government.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Departing from the audience, the reality of Mbacke's influence became apparent as 40 or more followers (the fortunate few permitted into the residential compound that day) shoved past us to spend some moments in the Khalif's presence. The Khalif provides religious and social proclamations for an estimated four million followers in Senegal, and thousands more in the U.S., Canada, Europe and the Middle East. He heads a movement that receives millions of

dollars a year in tithes from those followers. His Chief of Protocol said that Mbacke cannot go to the mosque or participate directly in the annual Magal pilgrimage in Touba because his followers would crush each other to be in his presence.

NON VIOLENCE IS A CREDO NOT A STRATEGY

14. (SBU) In briefing the Ambassador, the Director of the Library of Touba, Mr. Amdy Diattara, stressed that the Mourides have a specific identity, that includes a strong work ethic and a resolve towards nonviolence: "by faith and not by strategy." He further commented that they: "reject the use of force" and "have no qualms" in asserting this view to the Islamic world. Diattara stated that extremists have perverted the idea of jihad, stating that Islam is nobody's property: "We Mourides believe in ourselves and generating our own ideas ... our combat should only be about liberty, dignity, and educating people. Our spiritual leader did not teach us to kill, he taught us to have faith within our hearts and be on good terms with our fellow human beings."

SPREADING THE WORD

15. (SBU) The visit concluded with a tour of the headquarters of the Hizbut Tarquiyah Institute, the brotherhood's step into modernity, with hi-tech equipment and research spaces that promote interface with international researchers, and a focus on business development and the inclusion of women. This powerful Mouride association is also the largest youth movement in the brotherhood. It provides religious and vocational education to young people, supports women's economic activity, and manages the complicated logistics of the Magal that brings an estimated two million people to Touba once a year. The leader of Hizbut Tarquiyah, Mr. Atou Diagne, is often asked by the current Khalif to be the interface between the brotherhood and the Government. As noted in Ref B, Diagne is one of the Mourides' leading intellectuals outside of the Khalif's bloodline. He is working to modernize the movement and promote its

DAKAR 00001352 002 OF 002

beliefs to a wider audience.

16. (SBU) Following his 2006 participation in the Department's International Visitors Program for Young Muslim Leaders, Diagne used part of the Hizbut's Tarquiyah's estimated USD 2 million annual budget to bring all the participants from his program to Touba to further continue their dialog, explain the nonviolent Sufi philosophy of Mouridism, and to exchange ideas on how to spread positive messages about Islam. Diagne noted that "Mourides doctrine is a rehabilitation of Islam in its original form: "Islam is moderate; those other forms we see today are deviations." The visit is detailed in Hizbut Tarquiyah website at <http://www.htcom.sn>.

17. (SBU) When asked about Mouride participation in the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) Summit planned for Dakar in March 2008, Atou Diagne was dismissive of the effort, saying that as yet no invitation had been extended. He added that preparations for the summit are all about Arab countries financing projects in Senegal, and not about a true inter-Islamic dialog.

COMMENT

18. (SBU) The visit to Touba confirmed the Mourides' influence in Senegal and beyond, with both strong ties to tradition via the Khalif and efforts to have a modern, global reach, via Atou Diagne and the Hizbut Tarquiyah Institute. The question is how much greater impact will the Mouride movement have in the coming years politically, economically, and religiously? The Mourides' political influence is probably less than it could be. Despite the followers' general support of Wade, in large part due to the Khalif's personal relationship with him, they do not vote as a block, and the Khalif does not ask them to do so. Even without a united front, the Mourides are learning that they can have influence via individuals, whether it's a powerful marabout, such as Bethio Thioune (Ref B), or an influential government minister, such as Foreign Minister Cheikh Tidiane Gadio.

19. (SBU) While it is difficult to estimate the amount of direct

donations sent to the Khalif from the faithful, it is clearly in the tens of millions of dollars per year, and likely much more. Having almost captured the market in local transportation services, and remaining strong in agriculture, small-scale commerce, and construction, the issue is what to do with all the money? Whether the Mouride leadership and the most successful of its businesspeople decide to grow into light manufacturing or other sectors, the purchase of traditional financial instruments, or expand their investments in international property, as a group, the impact on Senegal will be profound.

¶10. (SBU) The most interesting question, however, is whether the next generation of Mouride leaders and intellectuals will be more public and aggressive in promoting their moderate, tolerant, and nonviolent brand of Islam. Atou Diagne and the Hizbut Tarquiyyah Institute certainly appear ready to go international, and with an economic base and strong networks in the U.S., Europe, Canada, and the Middle East, other Mouride leaders and institutions could well follow suit. END COMMENT.

¶11. (U) Visit Embassy Dakar's SIPRNET Web site at <http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/af/dakar>.

JACOBS